

8 JUN 1969

Soc. 4.01.4 Che!

Batman in Fatigues

"Revolt and revolution both wind up at the same crossroads," wrote Albert Camus. "The police, or folly." The men who made Che chose folly. As Screenwriters Michael Wilson and Sy Bartlett saw it, the Cuban revolution was just a Caribbean comic strip drawn in that country's green and peasant land. Its lu-



SHARIF AS CHE

One part of the Dynamic Duo.

minaries, Che Guevara (Omar Sharif) and Fidel Castro (Jack Palance) are Batman and Robin in fatigues. Che formulates the plans with a marvelously worldly wisdom, Fidel dimly grins; all that is missing is a light bulb over his head. When Guevara decides to aim nuclear missiles at the U.S., Castro's concern belongs in a balloon: "Do you think the Soviets would go for it?" By the time Che pushes on to Bolivia and oblivion, the characters and the conflict are distorted and despoiled.

In appearance, Sharif is astonishingly similar to Che, and Palance's broken-nosed, cigar-chomping cobra is as close to Castro as any American is likely to get. It is a pity that the actors could not grow insight or force along with their beards. Palance's circular hand motions and staccato vocalizing recall Cagney rather than Castro. Sharif's acting is not lively enough to be considered passive; his revolutionary ardor is expressed by a narrowing or widening of his large, liquid eyes.

Striving to placate all factions, the film actually represents none. One moment Che is a cultural hero; the next he is a messianic psychopath. As for Russia and the CIA, the film makes them worse than villains by reducing them to bystanders who have nothing to do with the central melodrama. The driven, half-poetic half-delusive doctor has become a worldwide legend in the past three years. Though his body was seen

and identified, he is still rumored to be alive somewhere in the mountains of South America. If anyone doubts Che's death he has only to look at the celluloid coffin that bears his name.